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Title: Regarding privatisation and closure of National Jute Manufacturing Corporation (NJMC) and Bird Jute and Export Limited (BJEL).

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, yesterday, we heard about the suicide of four employees of Centaur Hotel of Mumbai. Today, I have received a fax message that a number of workers belonging to National Jute Manufacturing Corporation and Bird Jute and Export Limited have committed suicide. The Government of India has decided to close down all the six mills of NJMC as well as BJEL. The management of NJMC and BJEL − the management being the same − is forcing and coercing the employees and workers to take VRS. They are almost in starvation. For the last five months, twenty-three thousand workers belonging to NJMC and BJEL have not received their salaries. The Government has not sanctioned any fund for payment of salaries to the workers of NJMC as well as BJEL.

As a result of this, the workers are on starvation. The workers are committing suicide. Therefore, I demand that the Government should take effective steps to revive − not to close down − these mills. If these mills are closed down, about 19,000 workers and also their family members will be thrown on the streets. So, Government should review the decision of closure of the six mills of NJMC as well as the BJEL. The Government should also release the funds immediately so that the salary of workers can be paid immediately....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR (BARRACKPORE): The case is pending.â€¦ (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Topdar, you will be associating with him.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Sir, why are we sitting in this Parliament? Sir, you are presiding over the House. We know your views. The people of this country are now on starvation. Nothing is there to fall back upon. The Government is sitting there. I do not know why we are also sitting here. What do we tell the people? Since we are in Parliament, people ask us to talk to the Government and try to do this and that. We cannot even earn something for these people. I do expect that something must be said on this. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : The Government should respond to this. The Minister should respond to this. The workers are committing suicide. They are starving. For the last five months, they have not received their salaries. What is this?...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR (BALLIA, U.P.): This is a serious matter. The Government has not been taking it seriously. Every time, there are some dissenting voices in the Cabinet. Sir, I am sorry to mention that you had a different view before you sat in that Chair. Some Ministers even threatened to go out of the Government. But soon after I read in the newspapers that there has been reconciliation among the Ministers and the policy would continue. The Disinvestment Minister, in his arrogance, said that nobody could stop the process, whatever may be the views, whatever may be the difficulties of the workers. He is ready to sell out everything that India has constructed and built during the last fifty years. One should know where one should start and what one should do. Are we to be the passive spectators of what is happening today? Every time, this question is raised by some friends and the Government just keep mum. All of a sudden, we hear in the newspapers that they have taken a decision to sell one company or the other company. They say that they would do it. They say that the workers are free to do anything. At the same time, the Government say that they are going to assure the minimum wages to the workers. Such contradictory statements are being made by this Government.

Sir, now they have got some victory somewhere in the country. They think that everything is coming from El Dorado; and somebody is coming tomorrow from there. Perhaps, they are going to bring about that El Dorado by magic. But the fact is that no country can progress unless and until the workers put in their hard work, whether they are peasants or workers. In spite of the natural resources, we have totally become beggars before the countries which are not going to help us in any manner. Should we sit silent? Under your Chairmanship, we should know how to stop this type of selling of this country.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Chandra Shekhar, you are aware that today, in the afternoon at four of the Clock, there is a discussion on Disinvestment. The Disinvestment Minister will be definitely replying to that. In the meantime, Shri Basu Deb Acharia has raised this issue.

...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप प्लीज सुनिये। आज आपको क्या हो गया है। सुबह से ही आप बार-बार उठकर बोलने लगते हैं।

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR : The problem is that they have got the majority. The Members of the NDA might be differing from the Government outside. But when voting comes, they are going by the assurance of the Deputy Prime Minister that the Government would be run according to the NDA agenda.

Sir, I do not know what is that NDA Agenda; whether it is being represented by the VHP or it is being represented by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Shri L.K. Advani; I do not know what is the NDA Agenda. My friends of NDA, most of them are sitting here, they do not know what they are going to do. The only thing is, we may have a discussion. They have the majority and by the majority they take it that they have got every authority to sell away the country. So, what is left out for the people of this country except revolting against the whole system?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need a direction from the Chair because it is a very serious issue. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL (LATUR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are of the same view which is expressed on the floor of the House. It is necessary for the Government to protect the interests of the weaker sections of the society. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): Mr. Speaker, Sir, is this not arrogance? The hon. ex-Prime Minister talks about arrogance of the Minister. To identify oneself with the nation saying 'I am the nation', if I am opposed, the nation is opposed, what sort of behaviour is this and what sort of attitude is this of the ex-Prime Minister? ...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदयः मैंने आपको इजाजत नहीं दी है। अगर जरूरत होगी तो मंत्री जी उत्तर देंगे। आप क्यों खड़े हो रहे हैं?

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I have permitted only Shri Shivraj Patil to speak. He will only speak now. Please take your seat.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Sir, it has been the policy of this nation, which is reflected in the Constitution, to help the weakest in the society and the best method of helping the weakest in the society economically is to provide employment to them. Instead of providing employment to them, if the employed people are thrown out of the job, it is not doing economic justice to them.

We are talking in terms which are not relevant to us. We shall have to talk in terms which are relevant to the majority of the people of this country. We want production, but not at the cost of the suffering of the workers in the country, we want production, but not at the cost of the suffering of the consumers and we want production to make this country strong. This is our feeling also, the feeling of the Members who have sat in this House for 30 years or 40 years, that we come here, express our views and go out, but we are not in a position to help those to whom the help should be extended by this House. Now, if this kind of helplessness is realised by us and experienced by us, sitting in this House, you can imagine what kind of helplessness the people who are thrown out of the job might be feeling and if the Government or we all, sitting here, do not rise to the occasion or do not realise the importance of helping those who should be helped, we will suffer and nobody will be helped.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the children of the workers have been taken out of the schools because they cannot pay the tuition fees even. Nothing can be done for them. Their education is stopped and there is absolutely nothing for them to eat. These people are coming here and what can we tell them? ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to add just two sentences here. The case of NJMC is pending before the BIFR and now it will go to the tribunal. But before that, they are selling it away and we know about it only through newspapers. When this House has passed a law by which this NJMC was formed, selling out NJMC in this manner is undemocratic and *ultra vires*. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am on a different issue, though I fully support the contention expressed by Shri Basu Deb Acharia, Shri Chandra Shekhar and our leader Shri Shivraj Patil. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the issue I raised is very important. There should be some response from the Government. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: It is for the Minister to decide what he wants to say.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, you have made an observation. I hope the Government takes note of it.

MR. SPEKAER: Yes; you have very strongly expressed your feelings.

...(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदयः दासमुंशी जी, अब आप बोलिए।